

## Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02 INR-07 L-02

NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 SAJ-01

SAM-01 NIC-01 /060 W

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P R 141834Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY LONDON

TO AMEMBASSY LISBON PRIORITY

INFO AMEMBASSY BONN

AMEMBASSY BRUSSELS

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

SECSTATE WASHDC 9292

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 3989

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1

TAGS: PINS, PO

SUBJECT: PRESS AND FCO REACTION TO PORTUGUESE COUP

REF: LISBON 1381

1. BRITISH PRESS AND MEDIA HAVE REPORTED ON COUP ATTEMPT AND AFTERMATH IN PORTUGAL IN CONSIDERABLE DETAIL. BBC HAS ALSO USED FILM CLIPS EFFECTIVELY, ACCOMPANIED BY SOBER ON-THE-SPOT COMMENTATOR. COVERAGE IN GENERAL HAS BEEN FACTUAL, WITH INCREASINGLY PESSIMISTIC TONE ON IMPLICATIONS OF THE COUP.

2. BRITISH MEDIA HAVE BEEN FOLLOWING DEVELOPMENTS IN PORTUGAL CAREFULLY, EVEN BEFORE THE COUP, AND VISITS THERE BY CALLAGHAN, RIPPON, TUC FIGURES HAVE EARLIER BEEN REPORTED IN DETAIL.

3. GENERAL TENOR OF COUP REPORTAGE IS THAT COUP WAS BADLY CONCEIVED, POORLY PLANNED AND EXECUTED, OFFERING THE LEFT PLENTY OF REASON FOR CRACKING DOWN ON MODERATES

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AND OTHER NON-COMMUNISTS. BRITISH PRESS TO DATE HAS

ACCEPTED POSSIBILITY SPINOLA WAS HIMSELF INVOLVED.

4. MEDIA LARGELY IGNORED STATEMENT MADE BY FOREIGN SECRETARY CALLAGHAN IN COMMONS MARCH 12 IN WHICH HE DEPLORED EVENTS IN PORTUGAL AND EXPRESSED HOPE FOR ESTABLISHMENT OF CONDITIONS WHICH WOULD PERMIT HOLDING OF SCHEDULED ELECTIONS, WITH DUE PROTECTION FOR ALL REPEAT ALL POLITICAL PARTIES.

5. IN CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF MARCH 14, PORTUGUESE DESK OFFICER (BARRETT) SAID HMG IS DISTURBED NOT SO MUCH BY ANTECEDANTS OF COUP BUT BY END RESULT: DESTRUCTION OF HEADQUARTERS OF NON-COMMUNIST PARTIES, JEOPARDIZING ELECTORAL CHANCES OF THESE PARTIES, WHOLESAL VENGTTA-LIKE CAMPAIGN OF ARRESTS, THREATENED NATIONALIZATION OF BANKS, ETC. BARRETT SAID AMATEURISH QUALITY OF COUP SUGGESTS POSSIBILITY COUP WAS PROVOCATORY IN NATURE, STATED TO GIVE COMMUNISTS AND LEFTIST ELEMENTS IN AFM OPPORTUNITY AND REASON FOR CRACK-DOWN. BARRETT NOTED THIS POSSIBLE CONCLUSION WAS NOT YET BUTTRESSED BY REPORTING FROM HMG'S EMBASSY, BUT SUSPICION WIDESPREAD IN FCO. FYI. BARRETT ALSO NOTED THERE HAS BEEN FAILURE IN COMMUNICATIONS WITH EMBASSY AND REPORT ON CONVERSATION BRITISH AMBASSADOR HAD WITH SOARES MARCH 13 NOT YET RECEIVED. END FYI.

6. BARRETT'S CONCERN PERHAPS REFLECTS OPINIONS IN CONSERVATIVE PARTY WHO RECENTLY HOSTED TWO HIGH-LEVEL CDS OFFICIALS (REF LONDON 3789). PARTY SPOKESMAN TOLD EMBOFF MARCH 13 THAT HE DETECTED NO DIFFERENCE IN OPINIONS ON PORTUGAL BETWEEN HMG-FCO AND HIS OWN PARTY; AT THE SAME TIME CONSERVATIVES WERE CONCERNED THAT HMG HAD NOT REGISTERED MORE OPENLY ITS DISAPPROVAL OF THE COUP AND ITS AFTERMATH.

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